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M^r. Chillingworths LETTER TOUCHING INFALLIBILITY.



Chillingworth [William]

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Good M^r. Leuger,

Hough I am resolved not to be much afflicted for the loss of that which is not in my power to keep, yet I cannot deny but the loss of a Friend goes very neer to my heart ; and by this name of a Friend I did presume, till of late, I might have called you : because, though perhaps for want of power and opportunity I have done you no good office, yet I have been alwayes willing and ready to do you the best service I could : and therefore I cannot but admire the affected strangeness which in your last Letter to me you seem to take upon you, renouncing in a manner all Relation to me, and tacitly excommunicating me from all Interest in you. The superscription of your Letter is to Mr. William Chillingworth, and the subscription *John Leuger* ; as if you either disdained, or made a conscience of stiling me your Friend, or

your self mine : If this proceed from passion and weakness, pray mend it, if from reason, pray shew it ; if you think me one of those to whom St. John forbids you to say, *God save you* ; then you are to think and prove me one of those deceivers, Who deny Christ Jesus to be come in the flesh ; if you think me an Heretick, and therefore to be avoided, you must prove me *autoxatakeitos*, condemned by mine own judgment, which I know I cannot, and therefore I think you cannot : If you say I do not hear the Church, and therefore am to be an Heathen, or a Publicane, you are to prove then that by the Church, is meant your Church of *Rome*, and yet when you have done so, I hope Christians are not forbidden to shew humanity and civility even to Pagans : For Gods sake Mr. *Leuger* free your self from this blind zeal, at least for a little space, and consider with reason and moderation what strange Crime you can charge me with, that should deserve this strange usage, especially from you : is it a crime with all my understanding, to endeavour to find your Religion true, and make my self a Believer of it, and not to be able to do so ? Is it a crime to employ all my reason upon the justification of the Infallibilitie of the Romish Church, and to find it impossible to be justified ? I will call God to witness (who knows my heart better than you do) that I have evened

the scale of my judgment as much as possibly I could, and have not willingly allowed any one grane of worldly Motives on either side, but have weighed the reasons for your Religion, and against it with as much indifferencie, as if there were nothing in the world but God and my self, and is it my fault, that the scale goes down which hath the most weight in it? That the building falls, that hath a false foundation? have you such power over your understanding, that you can believe what you please, though you see no reason? or that you can suspend your belief when you do see reason? if you have, I pray for old friendship-sake, teach me that trick; but until I have learned it, pray blame me not for going in the ordinarie way, I mean for believing, or not believing as I shall see reason: If you can convince me of wilfull opposition against the known truth, of negligence in seeking it, of unwillingness to find it, of preferring temporal respects before it, or of any other fault which is in my power to amend (that indeed is a fault) if I amend it not, be as angry with me as you please; but to impute to me involuntary errors, or that I do not see, that which I would see, but cannot, or that I will not confess that, which I do not believe; certainly this is a far more unreasonable error, then any you can justly charge me with. But let me tell you, that imputing Socianism

nianism to me, (whosoever was the Author of it) was a wicked and groundless slander : Perhaps you will say (for this is the usual song of that side) that Pride is a voluntary fault, and with this I am justly chargeable, for forsaking that guide which God hath appointed me to follow : but what if I forsook it, because I had reason to fear it was one of those blind guides which whosoever blindly follows, is threatned by our Saviour, that both he and his guide shall fall into the ditch ? Then I hope you will grant it was not Pride but Conscience, that caused me to do so: for as it is wise humility to obey those whom God hath set over me, so it is sinfull credulity to follow every man, or every Church, that without warrant will take upon them to guide me : Shew then some good and evident title, which the Church of *Rome* hath to this office, produce but one reason for it, which upon trial will not finally be resolved and vanish into uncertainty ; and if I yield not unto it, say if you please I am as proud as *Lucifer*. In the mean time give me leave to think it strange, and not far from a Prodigy, that this doctrine of the Romane Churches, being the guide of Faith (if it be true doctrine) should either not be known to the four Evangelists, or if it were known to them, that they being wise and good men, should either be so envious of the Churches happiness, or so forgetfull

of the good work they took in hand , which was to write the whole Gospel of Christ, as that not one of them should so much as mention, so much as once, this so necessary a part of the Gospel, without the belief whereof there is (as you would make the world believe) no salvation and with the belief whereof (unless men be snatched away by sudden death) there is hardly any damnation. It is evident they do all of them with one consent speak very plainly of many things of no importance in comparison hereof, and is it credible or indeed possible, that with one consent, or rather conspiracy, they should be so deeply silent concerning this *Unum necessarium*, this one very necessary thing ? You may believe it if you can, for my part I cannot, unless I see demonstration for it : For if you say, they send us to the Church, and consequently to the Church of *Rome*, this is to suppose that which never can be proved, That the Church of *Rome* is the only Church ; and without this supposal, upon the division of the Church, I am as far to seek of a Guide of my Faith as ever.

I As for example, in that great division of the Church, when the whole world wondred (saith S. Jerome) that it was become Arian, when *Liberius* Bishop of *Rome* (as S. *Athanafius*, S. *Jerome*, and S. *Hillary* testifie) subscribed their Heresie, and joyned communion with them: Or in the division

division between the Greek and the Romane Church about the Procession of the Holy Ghost, (when either side was the Church to it selfe, and each part heretical and schismatical to the other) what direction could I then an ignorant man have found from that Text of Scripture, *Unless he hear the Church, let him be unto thee, as an heathen or a Publican;* Or from another Text, *Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

2 Again give me leave to wonder, that neither S.Paul writing to the Romans, should so much as intimate this their priviledg of Infallibility, but rather on the contrary, put them in fear in the 11th Chapter, that they, as well as the Jews, were in danger of falling away.

3 That S.Peter, the pretended Bishop of Rome writing two Catholick Epistles mentioning his departure, should not once acquaint the Christians, whom he writes to, what Guide they were to follow, after he was taken from them.

4 That the Writers of the New Testament should so frequently forewarn men of Hereticks, false Christs, false Prophets, and not once arme them against them, with letting them know this onely sure meanes of avoiding their danger.

5 That so great a part of the New Testament

should be employed about Antichrist, and so little, and indeed none, about the Vicar of Christ, and the guide of the faithful.

6 That our Saviour should leave this onely means for the ending of Controversies, and yet speak so obscurely and ambiguously of it, that now our Judge is the greatest Controversie, and ~~je~~ greatest hindrance of ending of them.

7 That there should be better evidence in the Scripture to entitle the King to this office, who disclaims it, then the Pope, who pretends it.

8 That Saint Peter should never exercise over the Apostles any act of Jurisdiction, nor they ever give him any one title of Authority over them.

9 That if the Apostles did know that S. Peter was made Head of them, when our Saviour said, [*Thou art Peter, and on this Rock, &c.*] they should still contest who should be greatest, and that our Saviour should never tell them, that S. Peter was the man.

10 That S. Paul should say, that he was nothing inferior to the very chief of the Apostles.

11 That the *Catechumeni* or Novices in the Primitive Church, should never be taught this foundation of their faith, that the Church of *Rome* was the guide of their faith.

12 That the Fathers, *Tertullian*, *S. Jerome* and *Optatus*, when they flew highest in commendation of the *Romane Church*, should attribute

no more to her, then to all other Apostolical Churches.

13 That in the Controversie about *Easter*, the Bishops and Churches of *Asia* should be so ill catechized, as not to know this principle of Christian Religion, the necessity of conformity in Doctrine with the Church of *Rome*.

14 That they should never be pressed with any such necessity of conformity in all things, but only with the particular tradition of the Western Churches in that point.

15 That *Irenaeus* and many other Bishops notwithstanding, *Ad hanc Ecclesiam necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam*, should not yet think that a necessary Doctrine, nor a sufficient ground of Excommunication, which the Church of *Rome* thought to be so.

16 That *S. Cyprian* and the Bishops of *Africa*, should be so ill instructed in their faith, as not to know this foundation of it.

17 That they likewise were never urged with any such necessity of conformity with the Church of *Rome*, nor ever charged with heresie or error for denying of it.

18 That when *Liberius* joyned in communion with the Arrians, and subscribed their heresie, the Arrians should not then be the Church and guide of faith.

19 That never any Hereticks for five Ages af-

ter Christ, were pressed with this Argument of the Infallibility of the present Church of *Rome*, or charged with the denial of it as a distinct Heresie; so that *Aeneas Sylvius* (who was himself as Pope) should have cause to say, *Ante tempora Concilii Nicæni quisque sibi vivebat, & parvus respectus habebatur ad Ecclesiam Romanam.*

20. That the Ecclesiastical story of those times mention no Acts of Authority of the Church of *Rome* over other Churches; as if there should be a Monarchy, and the King for some ages together, should exercise no Act of Jurisdiction in it.

21. That to supply this defect the decretal Epistles should be so impudently forged, which in a manner speak nothing else but *Reges atque Monarchs*, I mean the Popes making Lawes for, and exercising authority over all other Churches.

22. That the Africane Churches in St. *Austins* time should be ignorant that the Pope was head of the Church, and judge of Appeals, *Jure divino*, and that there was a necessity of conformity with that Church in this and all other points of doctrine.

23. Nay that the Popes themselves should be so Ignorant of the true ground of this their Authoritie, as to pretend to it, not upon Scripture, or Universal Tradition, but upon an Imaginary, pretended non-such Canon of the Council of *Nice*.

24. That *Vincentius Lirinenis* seeking for a guide

of his faith, and a preservation from Heresie, should be ignorant of this so ready a one, the Infallibility of the Church of *Rome*.

All these things and many more are very strange to me ; if the infalliblity of the Roman Church be indeed and were alwayes by Christians acknowledged the foundation of our Faith : and therefore I beseech you pardon me, if I chuse to build mine upon one that is much firmer and safer, and lies open to none of these objections ; which is Scripture and Universal Tradition, and if one who is of this Faith may have leave to do so, I will subscribe with hand and heart.

*Your very loving and
true Friend,*

W. C.

Imprimatur,

M. FRANCK,
R. in Christo P. Dom.
Episc. Lond. à Sacris
Domesticis.

Sextil. 5.
1662.

